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SUBJECT: PRI SET TO WIN YUCATAN GOVERNORSHIP

11. (SBU) Summary. With 80% of the votes counted, it appears that PRI candidate Ivonne Ortega has won the race for Governor in the Yucatan. The elections occurred in a climate relatively free of conflict or controversy with some irregularities noted in smaller towns. The elections should not be viewed as a reflection of President Calderon's performance, but rather of political dynamics at the state level. End summary.

12. (SBU) On Sunday, May 20th, in the first electoral contest since Felipe Calderon assumed power, Yucatecos went to the polls in large numbers to vote for state and municipal representatives. The Yucatan Institute for Electoral Procedures and Civic Participation (IPEPAC) announced at noon that it had completed counting 80.52% of the votes. Results to date show Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) Candidate, Ivonne Ortega, leading with 49.70% of the vote. Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) candidate, Xavier Abreu, is trailing with 42.66%. At this point, there is a difference 44,200 votes separating the two candidates. Ortega's victory looks decisive in all districts, even in the state capital, Merida, which was predicted to be a PAN stronghold. Abreu has not yet formally ceded the election. However, he admits that the "tendencies are not in his favor."

13. (SBU) It appears that the PRI has regained a majority in the state legislature, having obtained 10 representatives. PAN gained 5 representatives. PAN appears to have retained control of Merida, with Cesar Bojorquez, former head of the water authority, leading in the race for mayor.

14. (SBU) Voters turned out in record numbers, with seventy percent of those eligible choosing to participate. Current Governor, Patricio Patron Lavado, came to power with 68.45 % of eligible voters participating. Turnout in last year's federal elections was 66.92%.

15. (SBU) Voting in Merida was calm with no irregularities noted. There were rumors of party representatives buying votes in small municipalities, including Rio Lagartos, Tizimin, and Tixcokob. In Tixcokob, Antinio Patron Laviada, brother of the current governor, was accused of election tampering by members of the PRI. He was detained by the police for questioning and released.

16. (SBU) One day after the election, public officials have started the arduous task of clearing Merida streets of campaign propaganda, including widely disbursed colored plastic banners. The head of municipal public services estimates that his staff will remove approximately 30 tons of campaign material.

17. (SBU) Embassy comment: Although this was Mexico's first state-wide election since President Calderon took office, the Yucatan contest should not be viewed as a referendum on Calderon's performance. A leading Mexico City political

analyst told Poloff it would be difficult to draw national conclusions from the elections, which he believed reflected local political conditions, dissatisfaction with the current PAN governor, and the personalities of the gubernatorial candidates. The Yucatan has been a PRI stronghold for decades, and the current governor's lack of popular support undermined the PAN candidate whose performance by most accounts was lackluster at any rate. Close state congressional and mayoral races suggest that Abreu's weakness was responsible for the gubernatorial loss.

18. (SBU) Embassy comment continued: Political analysts also assess that, while the loss may undermine the credibility of PAN's state apparatus, as well as its national leadership, it could be good news for President Calderon. A PRI loss would have complicated Calderon's ability to win PRI agreement for aspects of his legislative agenda, such as fiscal reform; a bitter, drawn out challenge to the results would have certainly complicated inter-party relations at the national level and complicated PAN's bargaining position in the federal congress. Abreu's outright concession will be a positive signal. End Embassy comment.

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